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that the latter book ought rather to have been called the *Edwardbokanization of America*. Of penetrating epigram, among other things, Mr. Ford shows himself more than occasionally to be a master, and he draws an unforgettable composite portrait of the period through which he has lived.

DOGTOWN COMMON. By Percy MacKaye. New York: The Macmillan Company.

The versatility of some of our modern poets—their ability to deal artistically with varied themes and with varying aspects of the same theme—is amazing. Mr. MacKaye's new poem, *Dogtown Common*, is a case in point. The theme, the actual story which Mr. MacKaye has undertaken to tell, seems unpromising: if it is full of artistic opportunities, it is by the same token replete with artistic difficulties—real difficulties; not like the difficulty of cutting and polishing a jewel, but rather like the difficulty of putting a high polish upon basswood. If you think what the facts of the real story were, or could have been, you will appreciate the temerity of the poet. Beside it, the temerity of Wordsworth shrinks to nothing; for Wordsworth, great innovator as he was, simply supposed that he had discovered something divine in nature, and in simple people who lived close to nature, and was content with attempting to reveal it. If his inspiration failed him, he was willing to believe that the divine element would reveal itself to kindred souls through his always simple and often prosy diction. But Mr. MacKaye insists that a simple and, in some aspects, a rather sordid tale of old New England life, shall glow with all the colors of life, phosphorescent and rainbow-like. In this he is quite different from the romantic poets of the classic line, who, on the contrary, introduced into fantastic worlds, full of inconsequential rainbow flashes and phosphorescent imaginings, a great deal of the freshness and innocence, the very earth-smell, of nature. The difference, if one must state one's conviction, is that Keats and Shelley and Shakespeare made fancies live, with a natural life and a pure passion, while Mr. MacKaye *adorns* a tale of real life.

Dogtown Common is a tale of witchcraft, of love, and lust, and religious bigotry, and religious emotion. Tammy Younger, who lives in Dogtown in the heart of Cape Ann, is the last of the witches; her niece, the red-lipped Judy Rhines, is a lovely untutored girl, essentially a "beautiful soul." The minister, John Wharf, is a religious Galahad, of the familiar type—an ever-attractive if somewhat conventional figure. There is also Peter Bray, a big brute of a sailor. These are the essential characters. Some young folks, off for a lark, are led by Peter Bray to Tammy's forbidden cottage, there to have their fortunes told and perhaps to witness some exhibitions of witchcraft. Peter Bray makes an attempt upon Judy's virtue, but is hypnotized by her with the aid of a candle flame. In the midst of this dramatic scene arrives John Wharf, drawn by a telepathic message from Judy. Of course the minister is in love with the witch's niece, herself branded as witch through the mean jealousy of

some of the Dogtown young folks, and of course he tries to save her soul, only to find that souls are to be saved only through love. But what is love? John Wharf is naturally quite unable to analyze the mixture of unaccustomed passion, pure love, religious emotion, and psychic attraction, which moves him. He persuades Judy to go to church, where Peter Bray breaks in and denounces him, causing a riot. The upshot is that Judy, either by accident or design, or a little through both, hangs herself in a rowan tree, where the minister finds her in the night.

The reader will not fail to perceive the diversity of elements and of motives in this story. There is the old-ballad sentiment of the whole, which fairly demands the somewhat inconsequential hanging at the end, and necessitates that this shall occur on a tree of some sort, and not, as so often in real life, in the barn. There is the genuine, if slightly overdone, realism of the reflections of village life and character—the real pettiness, narrowness, vulgarity of a simple community of the sort often too much idealized. But this latter does not fit perfectly with the ballad sentiment, and still less does it accord with the rather romantic central characters, the Galahad preacher and the “beautiful soul.” Similarly there is a clash between the gruesomeness of the witch parts and the rationalizing touch, the covert suggestion of hypnotism and telepathy and Paladino. When one sets out to be gruesome in the old-fashioned way, one must be genuinely old-fashioned. It requires the genius of a Henry James (*vide The Two Magics*) for a skeptical modern well versed in psychic research to put anything of the real old ghost-story thrill into a story of the supernatural. You must believe these things. Mr. MacKaye stirs a nerve when he writes:

Who knows what messages Tomorrow gets
From charnelled Yesterday?—What quivering thread
Conjoins the buried quick and buried dead?

But the psychic references are, on the whole, disillusioning. And, as a whole, the poem does not satisfy; it seems to represent a conflict of artistic motives—a disposition to make its queer materials shine and glow in every conceivable light.

But whatever may be said of its total effect, *Dogtown Common* is poetic throughout. Every part of the tale is in some way vividly realized; the power and picturesqueness of the language is astonishing. One may instance the following fragment of a confused lantern-lit night scene:

The girls drew close, like pigeons bill to bill
In a seed-loft; but Peter, chewing wrath,
Turned up the path—

Or the Masefieldian description of Peter himself—

He was a brawny seaman,
Was Peter Bray, and lusty in his pranks.
He fed a wild-oats stallion in his shanks,

And when he played the freeman
 With girls ashore and looked at Steve and said
 'Let be, man,'
 Stephen *let be*; for Pete had stormed it on the Banks,
 And Steve knew well there was no long-shore huffer
 Dared call Pete bluffer.

Similarly the dialogue is almost always both poetically powerful and thoroughly in character. If the people of the story would not have said such things as they say in just such a way as they say them, the reader does not observe it. Mr. MacKaye's version is just more expressive than the original could have been—that is all.

One holds no brief against the new poetry; it is merely in an experimental stage, and its apparent perversity in the choice of materials, its confusion of motives, may and sometimes does connote a larger vision of life. Thus one reads Mr. MacKaye's poem with admiration, if not always with pleasure.

A BALLAD-MAKER'S PACK. By Arthur Guiterman. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Writers of light verse—like Calverly, for one—are not unlikely to have a poetical vein, and when they have it there is apt to be a peculiar genuineness and downrightness about it. Writing humorous verse must have a tendency to keep even a poet free from extravagance and self-deception, while it by no means quenches his love of the beautiful. Probably *The Chambered Nautilus* and *The Last Leaf* could not have been so nearly perfect in their kind if their author had been incapable of writing *The One Hoss Shay*. And would not Wordsworth have been the better for a sense of humor?

Mr. Guiterman is the most consistently clever of our versifiers. His "rhymed reviews," especially, show a delicate and cultivated sense of absurdity and of truth; and they are so adequate that one does not see how he does them.

His ballads, though less original in both matter and form, than one might have expected, and somewhat lacking in *surprise*, are uniformly good. They have an unforced grace, a brave ring, a bold and ballad-like spirit. They embrace a great range of themes drawn from folklore, history, or modern life. Each one is the expression of a sincere taste, a genuine sentiment, or of that love for a subject that comes of long dwelling with it. A kind of unstudied brilliancy and dash joined to elegance and restraint distinguish them from more naïve performances in this kind.